



AHPC-1304-COPC-01

ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONS COUNCIL CODE OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT (2013)

Preamble

The Allied Health Professions Council was established on 8 April 2013 to regulate the Allied Health Professions in Singapore. As part of its mandate to protect the public, the Code of Professional Conduct (“the Code”) was developed to set the standards of conduct and behaviour expected of registered allied health professionals.

The Code was developed based on a health professional’s obligation to act in the best interest of patients and the public (fiduciary duty) and ethical principles of:

- a) Beneficence; this refers to doing good to others;
- b) Non-maleficence, this refers to doing no harm to others;
- c) Respect for your patient’s privacy and confidentiality;
- d) Respect for your patient’s autonomy, this refers to their right to refuse or choose their treatment;
- e) Fair and just provision of health services; and
- f) Personal integrity.

Allied health professionals provide a wide range of services to the public in both the health and social care sectors. As a registered professional, you have a duty to promote and protect the health and safety of your patients at all times. The Code lays down a set of principles for your professional relationships, practice and conduct with respect to users¹ of your professional services, your own profession, and between professions.

As a registered professional, you are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Code at all times. Adherence to the Code will not only protect your patient and the public but also you from allegations or complaints made against you. Persistent failure and disregard for these standards can compromise patient safety and well-being, and/or bring disrepute to the profession. Breach of these standards can lead to you being asked to defend your actions, and face disciplinary proceedings for professional misconduct or failure to maintain competence.

¹ Include, and not limited to, patients, clients, and caregivers

As a registered Allied Health Professional, you are expected to always:

1. Act in the best interest of your patient and the public;
2. Respect your patient's privacy and maintain confidentiality of information;
3. Respect your patient's choice and right to refuse or choose their treatment (autonomy), and obtain informed consent to give treatment;
4. Communicate effectively with your patient, caregivers and other professionals;
5. Ensure that any advertising you do or support is truthful, accurate and does not induce unnecessary demands for your services;
6. Act within the limits of your knowledge, skill and experience, and if necessary, refer the matter to another professional;
7. Limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health or other reasons;
8. Keep accurate and adequate patient records;
9. Engage in professional development and keep your professional skills and knowledge up-to-date;
10. Effectively supervise tasks you have asked others to complete and undertake supervisory duties you have been assigned professionally;
11. Maintain high standards of personal conduct and behaviour;
12. Abide by all laws and regulations governing your practice and the code of ethics of your profession and the Council.

The rest of this document explains these principles and its intention in greater detail such that you understand how the Code may be applied. The Code should be understood in its entirety and not in its parts. However, it does not endeavour to cover all circumstances that registered allied health professionals will face. When in doubt, you are to consult the Council.

1. Act in the best interest of your patient and the public.

- 1.1. Your decisions must be guided by the best interest of your patient and the public.
- 1.2. You must take responsibility for the safety and welfare of your patient and the public at all times.
- 1.3. You must not allow personal biases and prejudices to affect the quality of services provided to your patient.
- 1.4. You must not provide more services than required except where requested for by, and/or agreed with, your patient, and within the principles set out in section 5 of the Code.
- 1.5. When you encounter conflicting interests and priorities within the context of your practice, you must place the safety and welfare of your patient as your first priority and give due consideration also to safeguarding the public.
- 1.6. You must inform the Council if you have any important information or evidence of the health, conduct or competence of other registrants you work with that may negatively impact the safety and welfare of patients and/or the public.
- 1.7. You must deal fairly and safely with risks of infection to your patient and to yourself, and not refuse to treat your patient just because they have an infection. You must also take precautions against the risk that you will infect someone else.
- 1.8. When participating in clinical research, you must put the care and safety of your patient first and ensure that the trial is approved by an ethics committee and conforms to clinical practice guidelines recognised by the Ministry of Health, or the Council. In addition, informed consent must be obtained from your patient.

2. Respect your patient's privacy and maintain confidentiality of information.

- 2.1. You must not in any way exploit or abuse the relationship with your patient and the trust your patient has placed in you.
- 2.2. You must keep your patient's records confidential, and use the information obtained in the course of your professional practice only for the purposes for which it was given, or where it is otherwise lawful.
- 2.3. You must ensure that there is no disclosure of any patient information without consent, except where it is required or permitted by law or if it is required to protect your patient or others from harm.
- 2.4. You must take reasonable steps to make sure that there is no unauthorised access, use or accidental disclosure of your patient's information.

2.5. Where you may encroach upon your patient's privacy during therapy or in providing a service, you are to obtain consent from your patient prior to proceeding.

2.6. In keeping with Section 3 of the Code, you must respect your patient's refusal for therapy, whether in part or in whole, for situations where your patient's privacy is involved.

3. Respect your patient's choice and autonomy, and obtain informed consent to give treatment.

3.1. You must ensure that your patient understands his need for therapy, the treatment or services to be provided, the risks involved and expected outcomes from the treatment provided prior to proceeding, except in an emergency situation.

3.2. If your patient is unable to give consent, informed consent should be obtained from authorised caregivers.

3.3. If your patient or his caregivers (where applicable) refuses treatment that you believe is necessary for their well-being or else would put them at significant risk of harm, you must take reasonable efforts to persuade them to be treated.

3.4. You must respect the decision of your patient or caregivers (where applicable).

3.5. You must make reasonable records of the information provided to your patient, your patient's consent or decision on treatment provided, in accordance with Section 8 of the Code.

3.6. You must respect your patient's wish for a second opinion, and/or decision to consult with other health professionals.

4. Communicate effectively with your patient, his caregivers, and other healthcare professionals.

4.1. You must be truthful, respectful and courteous in all your professional communications, whether with your patient, his caregivers, or other professionals.

4.2. You must take reasonable steps to ensure effective communication with your patient, his caregivers, your fellow professional colleagues and other healthcare professionals, to optimise outcomes for your patient.

4.3. You must ensure that you provide the necessary information and assistance, including the sharing of your knowledge and expertise, to other healthcare professionals as required to effect optimal outcomes for your patient.

- 4.4. You must ensure that your communication with your patient and/or his caregivers is done in a manner that does not impair confidence in other professionals involved in his care.
- 4.5. Where decisions conflict between professions, you must be civil in collaborating together towards the best interest of your patient.
- 4.6. You must endeavour to communicate clearly and effectively with your fellow professional colleagues, and other professionals
- 4.7. You must update other professionals involved in the care of your patient where appropriate.
- 4.8. You must direct your patient with a referral to a named centre or professional to the correct provider, unless your patient autonomously, and without coercion, requests for your care.
- 5. Ensure that any information you provide, advertising you do or support is accurate and does not induce unnecessary demands for your services.**
 - 5.1. You must not induce your patient to acquire more services than are required.
 - 5.2. You must ensure that any advertising you do or support, or any information provided about you or your services:
 - 5.2.1. Is truthful, factual and accurate.
 - 5.2.2. Does not have unsubstantiated or embellished claims in relation to a product or service.
 - 5.2.3. Does not give the impression that your personal skills, equipment or facilities is better than others.
 - 5.3. You must not support or engage in any advertisements that are misleading, false, unfair or exaggerated.
 - 5.4. You must not mislead the public and your patients with regard to your professional standing and expertise.
 - 5.5. You must not provide package deals, discounts or coupon discounts for professional services rendered if it contravenes the principles set out in Section 5.1 of the Code.
 - 5.6. If your patient does not require or agree to subsequent services during the course of a package purchased, reimbursement must be allowed.
 - 5.7. Your advice and recommendations on products or services to your patient must not be influenced by financial or other forms of rewards:

5.7.1. If you have a financial interest in an organisation or service to which you intend to refer patients for any treatment or investigation, you must always disclose this interest to your patient before making a referral.

5.7.2. You may be invited to participate in activities not limited to events, conferences, talks, publications or educational websites sponsored by companies marketing healthcare, pharmaceutical or medical products. You must ensure that your participation does not occur in such a way as to appear to endorse such products, or persuade patients or members of the public to use the products. All potential conflicts of interest should be declared to the audience.

6. Act within the limits of your knowledge, skill and experience, and if necessary, refer the matter to another professional.

6.1. You must only practice within the scope of your own competence, or the fields in which you have the appropriate education, training and experience, or if you have been required to do so by the Council.

6.2. You must manage and treat your patient according to generally accepted methods in your profession for appropriate indications and conditions you are trained to manage.

6.3. When starting in or returning to a field of practice where you have limited or no recent experience, you may be required to practise under supervision or according to the conditions and standards set by the Council.

6.4. On returning to practice, you must ensure that you have adequate supervision and support from colleagues who are competent in the field of practice.

6.5. You must consult or refer to a fellow professional or to one of another relevant profession for further advice or treatment if you discover in the course of treating your patient that your patient requires interventions that are beyond your own scope of practice or experience.

6.6. When managing a self-referred patient, you must take reasonable steps to ensure that any medical practitioner responsible for the care of your patient is adequately informed of the treatment you are rendering to your patient.

6.7. When accepting a referral from other professionals, you must ensure that you fully understand the request, and provide treatment only if you believe it is appropriate or in your patient's best interest to do so. If this is not the case, you must discuss the matter with the professional who has made the referral and your patient.

6.8. You must only practise complementary and alternative medicine or therapies as an adjunct. You must be adequately trained and certified by the proper authority prior to doing so. In addition, your patient must be informed clearly of the complementary and alternative nature of the treatment and should consent to be treated by these approaches.

7. Limit your work or stop practising if your performance or judgement is affected by your health or other reasons.

- 7.1. You must limit your scope of work or stop practising if your ability to practise safely and effectively is adversely affected by your mental or physical health or for any other reason.
- 7.2. You must seek help and advice from a suitably qualified medical practitioner, and fellow professionals, on ways that you can change your practice to continue to be safe and effective, or stop practising if it is necessary.
- 7.3. If you are suffering from any transmittable infections, you must take necessary precautions and limit your practice in ways necessary to prevent infecting others. You are also to seek medical advice and act on it.
- 7.4. You must inform the Council of any significant changes in your mental or physical health, and resulting changes in your practice.

8. Keep accurate and adequate patient records.

- 8.1. You must keep records for every patient you treat, or who have consulted you for professional advice or services, for at least three years from the last date of entry in your patient's records.
- 8.2. You must ensure that the records are complete, and legible, and to sign and date all entries. The records should be in the format generally accepted by, and familiar to, your profession. Complete records means that records must include at least the following:
 - 8.2.1. Relevant patient details;
 - 8.2.2. Medical and social history;
 - 8.2.3. Findings on physical examination (if performed);
 - 8.2.4. Assessment of therapeutic problems;
 - 8.2.5. Any investigations done (if applicable);
 - 8.2.6. Treatment plan proposed and performed;
 - 8.2.7. Treatment outcomes and progress of your patient; and
 - 8.2.8. Discussions between yourself, your patient, his caregivers, and other professionals (including informed consent as applicable)
- 8.3. You must not tamper with or erase information that has been entered previously into any patient records.

- 8.4. If you are legitimately updating or amending the information, you must ensure that the previous information is not made difficult to read, and simply mark the error with a strike-through line, sign and date the amendment.

9. Engage in professional development and keep your professional skills and knowledge up-to-date.

- 9.1. You are responsible for keeping informed of changes and developments in the field of your profession.
- 9.2. You must endeavour to promote and participate actively in continued learning, professional development and advancement of knowledge and skills of yourself and your profession.
- 9.3. You are strongly encouraged to initiate, participate and engage in activities both within and between professions in developing, integrating and improving patient care.
- 9.4. You must be able to meet the standards set by the profession in which you are practising.

10. Effectively supervise tasks you have asked others to complete and undertake supervisory duties you have been assigned professionally.

- 10.1. You must give appropriate supervision to the professional whom you are supervising.
- 10.2. You must ensure that the professional under your supervision has the necessary competencies prior to performing the tasks assigned.
- 10.3. You must be responsible for ensuring that the safety of your patient is not compromised at all times when delegating duties to other personnel.
- 10.4. You must ensure that the standards of patient care expected are not compromised when delegating tasks and duties to other personnel.
- 10.5. You must not force the professional under supervision to undertake a task which he is not confident of handling.
- 10.6. You must ensure that there is clear documentation of the supervision provided.
- 10.6.1. If documentation is done by a student, you must countersign and date the entry.

10.6.2. If documentation is done by a conditionally or temporarily registered professional under your supervision, you must countersign and date the entries for cases directly supervised, and at the point of case audits.

11. Maintain high standards of personal and professional conduct and behaviour.

- 11.1. You must always behave with honesty and integrity.
- 11.2. You must not engage in any improper relationship or behaviour with your patient and the immediate members of your patient's family.
- 11.3. You must ensure that your behaviour, whether in your personal or professional capacity, does not damage the public confidence in you or your profession, or bring disrepute to your profession.
- 11.4. You must not, in your professional capacity, support the services provided by persons or organisations that do not provide legitimate allied health, medical or medical support services.
- 11.5. You must not be involved in any marketing and sales of products or services which are not in keeping with the practices of the profession or unrelated to the practice of your profession when acting in your professional capacity.

12. Abide by all laws and regulations governing your practice and the code of professional conduct of your profession and the Council.

- 12.1 You must keep to the laws and regulations of your profession and of the Council.
- 12.2 You are to report any breach in such laws and regulations of other professionals or colleagues to the Council.